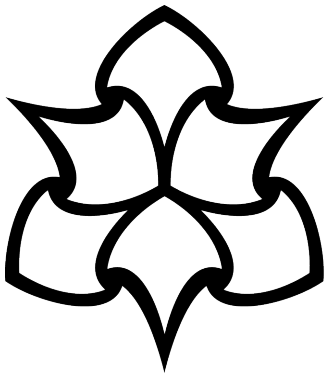

Leadership and the power of others: Rethinking leadership with Magical Marxism and Spinoza

1. Introduction

This chapter presents a reminder to the field of critical education management and leadership studies to foreground the following question prior to locating and interpreting forms of leadership: how might activity within and between schools and communities be inspired, motivated and organised? The turn to leadership in education policy, practice and scholarship has been profound, despite persuasive social, political and critical critiques. How might scholars and practitioners move beyond this agenda, to think and practise otherwise?

My PhD research focused on a local-authority initiative, the Stockborough Challenge, that began as an attempt by local-authority managers to better understand inter-professional collaboration and to develop facilitative conditions as part of the national Every Child Matters agenda but, following national policy, the initiative became a campaign of cultural change articulated through a particular construction of leaders and leadership which makes a series of assumptions; for example, that senior individuals in local authorities or schools are the key agents, called *leaders*, who articulate visions and develop initiatives of significance. The contribution of this chapter is to demonstrate and theorise how the collaboration evident in the Stockborough Challenge drew in fact on a neighbouring community initiative, Fantastic Food Dalewood, whose imagination, power and vitality helped to resolve the immanent policy-objective contradictions within the Stockborough Challenge. In this chapter, I aim to disrupt the dominant leadership discourse reproduced in and through the Challenge by exploring the methodological potential of Magical Marxism in combination with Spinoza as sources of novel and important theoretical and practical strategies for asking questions relating to power. How, for instance, might it be reconsidered and reconstituted to account for relationships between radical political projects and leadership in schools and the public sector?

The case proceeds in six sections; outlining Magical Marxism, explicating a Spinozist version of Magical Marxism, explaining the Stockborough Challenge initiative, re-thinking the Stockborough Challenge in Magical Marxist terms, and rethinking leadership in light of this discussion. The data were collected as part of a doctoral study, during the period 2009 to 2010, and are drawn from 76 interviews with local-authority managers, education professionals and activists from Fantastic Food Dalewood.

2. Magical Marxism

In his book *Magical Marxism,* Andy Merrifield (2011) seeks 'to make mischief with Marxism' (p.xii), presenting an expansive and erudite case for radical imagination and utopianism, a poetry of life and the future, emphasising the affirmative and affective as the necessary response to the flattened unreality of neoliberalism. Merrifield proposes using Magical Marxism to explore ways of theoretically and practically disrupting, inventing and replacing the ostensible rationality, respectability and power of neoliberal social-economic relations.

Merrifield weaves together a range of radical ideas and theorists' work (e.g. Andre Gorz and Herbert Marcuse) but focuses on two books that powerfully and playfully engage with reality and unreality: First, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's (1994) *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in which magical realism 'draws artistic sustenance from reality, yet converts this reality into a reality *détourned*, into a reality of illusions' (Merrifield 2011: 30). For example, fluttering yellow butterflies always accompany Mauricio Babilonia. Second, Debord's (1968) situationist classic *The Society of the Spectacle* in which we learn that 'the spectacle lies "at the heart of the unrealism of real society"' (Thesis 6). Since the publication of Society of the Spectacle in the 1960s, society has changed significantly, with the proliferation of images as one example, but rather, 'The spectacular society we inhabit today, then, it's not a disguised world so much as a banal world, an obvious flattened reality', with Magical Marxism as, 'a call to bring a new content to life, to introduce deep texturing into something that's been flattened' (Merrifield, 2011: 37-38).

Reading *Magical Marxism* was at first simply a guilty pleasure but my mind continually returned to my PhD study, conducted on a local-authority initiative to

improve collaboration in children's services. It is not a book about educational leadership and management or the functioning of the public sector. This is instead a book more at home at the edge and in the cracks of society. It argues for opposing, resisting, jamming and replacing the state. Nevertheless, Merrifield's sole focus confronts a recurrent concern of much critical educational scholarship, how to understand and respond to the predominance of the neoliberalising project (e.g. Apple, 2006; Connell, 2013). So what can be learned to inform research and practice in the relationships within and between schools, *public* services and communities. I suggest the following:

In grounding responses to neoliberalism, Merrifield dismisses the 'dour realism of critical negativity' in Marxist analyses that operate by identifying and applying concepts such as 'alienation' to unmask *truer* accounts of reality (Merrifield, 2011: 1). He traces from the Hegelian origins of Marxism the influence of 'not-something' on prominent strands of critical theory, 'For Hegel, in short, world history is dramatized by the darker side of things, through what things aren't, through denying (cf. the Latin negare), through the predicate not-something.' (Hegel, 1807 quoted in Merrifield 2011: p.111) Instead, Magical Marxism aims 'to become the least worst of architects, imagining something in the present tense while struggling to realise it in the future' (Merrifield 2011: 37).

There is a risk in translating an explicitly *radical* project from the self-sufficient commune to the headteacher's office that the language of imagination, dreaming and poetry might be merely re-appropriated into a managerialising discourse comfortable with inspiration, visions, storytelling and celebration. Thus imagination is 'the radical capacity to envisage things differently and construct alternative political projects' (Bottici 2014: 1). In particular, the orientation is towards alternative and affirmative modes of re-organising social, political and economic formations. Merrifield proposes a range of theoretical resources for informing a positive and affirmative alternative, including Hardt and Negri's (2005) affirmative project that is grounded in the philosophy of Spinoza (Spinoza, 1996), which I develop in the next section.

3. Spinoza

Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677) was a 17th Century Dutch philosopher whose work spanned scriptural analysis, metaphysics and politics. Spinoza's work emphasises how people might adequately understand their position in the world; freeing themselves from ideas of a providential God and the bondage of affects such as hope and fear, to thrive in conditions of sociability.

Spinoza engages with the immanent reality of the relational and interdependent nature of collective life, for example, 'to man, then, there is nothing more useful than man… all should strive together, as far as they can, to preserve their being; and that all, together, should seek for themselves the common advantage of all' (Spinoza, 1996, IVP18s). Interdependent and faced with the challenge of living alongside one another, people can free themselves from the 'bondage of the emotions', affects such as fear and hope, through rationality and by developing adequate ideas, that is to better and truly understand the causes of ourselves, objects and events, within an infinite chain of causality. Thus, Spinoza presents greater understanding and rational knowledge as coming to better understand our relationship to the world, for example,

> He who rightly knows that all things follow from the necessity of the divine nature… will surely find nothing worthy of hate, mockery or disdain, nor anyone whom he will pity. Instead, he will strive, as far as human virtue allows, to act well, as they say, and rejoice. (Spinoza, 1996: IVP50S)

The essence or coherence of the individual is man's appetite or will (*conatus*) for self-preservation and extend his/her capacity to act to realise joy, avoid pain and realise his/her benefit. The individual is not imbued with a power by entitlement, indeed, 'the right of the individual is co-extensive with its determinate power' (Spinoza, 2001: 173). This statement does not imply that might equals right but is an implication of Spinoza's differentiation between *potestas* and *potentia* (Balibar 2008). *Potestas* is the juridical, legal power of the state, which significantly is founded on the power of the multitude. *Potentia* is variously described as the constituent and immanent power of the subject or multitude, power as concrete activity, and power as empowerment (Ruddick, 2010). Joy is fundamental in Spinoza to the processes of collective empowerment and emancipation (potentia), and by joy, 'the movement or passage towards a greater capacity for action' (Nadler, 2002: 235). Or, as Balibar

(2008: 98) defines the project as, 'the search for a collective strategy of collective liberation, whose guiding motto would be *as many as possible, thinking as much as possible* (Ethics, VP5-10).'

Thinking with Spinoza in terms of leaders and leadership forces a focus on individuals and the dynamic and productive relationships between individuals. The individual possesses finite powers of extension and thought, embodied and thinking powers, in relation the totality of the external world (Sharp, 2007). This leads to an interpretation, the 'therapy reading', in which careful thought leads to calmness and tranquility as one can rationally locate oneself within causes and effects but this is to ignore the importance of power and activity (Kisner 2011). To increase one's power involves changes in both the mind and correspondingly, changes in bodies and in directing action, that is, 'freedom involves stamping one's causal footprint on to the world' (Kisner 2011, 5).

It is prudent to note that bringing together Magical Marxism and Spinoza is not without tension. The radical imagination of dreaming up new political projects in Magical Marxism has different emphasises to Spinozist thought in which the imagination is bodily experience and affective awareness, relating to affects such as hope and fear. As Dennis (2017), notes the varying interpretations of the imagination in readings of Spinoza. Spinoza defines the imagination and affects, as confused ideas and the source of all error that must be addressed through rational thought. Where there is hope there is also fear and ones power is diminished. There are interpretations of Spinzoa, however, that see that the cultivation of the imagination and affects as integral to collective projects to thrive in conditions of sociability (e.g. Balibar 1998). However, as Hasana Sharp (2007: 750) observes,

> Spinoza's suggestions for the collective cultivation of reason and joyful affects in light of our radical finitude remain underdeveloped. The need for the shared development of thinking power is often more of a conclusion than a premise of his analysis, and thus does not receive more than abstract prescriptions for the task for which his entire philosophy calls … he is not very clear about the precise practices, institutions, or environments that fortify thinking.

I suggest that Magical Marxism provides an orientation towards exploring the 'precise practices, institutions, or environments that fortify thinking' that is called for in Spinoza. Magical Marxism provides an orientation for critical scholarship to document, explicate and illuminate the contradictions, biases and wrongheadedness in neoliberalising and managerialising processes but also recognises the limitations of forms of critical judgement. This aligns with the critique of critique, the shift within and beyond critique, critical negativity and de-mystification as central analytical activities and political strategies (Latour, 2004), a move manifest in critical educational research that seeks to develop productive and preferable alternatives (e.g. Apple, 2010). Magical Marxism and Spinozist thinking orientate towards seeking to identify and uncover strategies that powerfully bring together bodies, ideas and minds constituted by potentia forms of power. This orientation seeks to engage with a diverse repertoire of strategies, practices and rationalities for leadership as inspired forms of radical imagination and collective agency underpinned by an affirmative ontological understanding of human motivation.

4. Reconciling contradictory motivations

For my doctoral studies I researched the Stockborough Challenge, a local-authority initiative that began as an attempt to understand how professionals could work together to improve inter-professional and inter-organisational collaboration across children's services but became a cultural change campaign, in line with the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda (DfES 2004).

The Stockborough Challenge reflected the uneasy transition between eras of managerialising reforms, New Public Management (NPM) to post-NPM arrangements (Christensen and Lægreid, 2011). These contradictions related to particular ontological understandings of human motivation and appropriate ways of organising the public sector in relation to policy priorities for greater collaboration. NPM reforms were constituted from ontological understandings of the individuals and professionals as rational and self-interested, with robust accountability (e.g. targets and inspection) and market incentives to ensure adequate performance (Kaboolian 1998; Stoker and Moseley 2010; Boston 2011). These service-specific incentives became increasingly problematic, however, when policy began to

prioritise professionals and services working together through increased partnership and collaboration to engage 'wicked issues' or improve interdependent outcomes (Clarke and Stewart 1997, Talbot and Johnson 2007). However, although modified in some respects, the performance-accountability regime that constrained collaboration remained intact (Frost and Parton, 2009).

The shift to post-NPM sought to reconcile the tensions between competitive rationalities and collaborative imperatives through a range of strategies including leaders promoting cultural change around forms of commonality and towards a common culture – as the Stockborough Challenge sought to do. Leaders and leadership were instrumental in delivering and developing both the NPM and post-NPM reform eras (Gunter 2012). Leaderist approaches were one part of the shift to post-NPM wherein leaders were construed as 'espousing visions, embodying values and modelling appropriate behaviours' in order to reconcile the contradictions within the NPM regime and policy orientations to collaborate to realise interdependent outcomes' (O'Reilly and Reed 2010: 968). It is significant therefore in seeking to reconcile the contradictions of managerialising reforms, the policy response employed similarly managerialising and neoliberalising technologies and strategies further reflecting and entrenching particular rationalities, subjectivities and ontological assumptions of human or professional motivation.

The Stockborough Challenge

The Stockborough Challenge began in 2008 and ran until 2010 as an initiative developed by senior leaders in the Local Authority to re-organise Stockborough Children's Services to increase collaboration across children's services, in line with the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda (DfES, 2004). At the start of the initiative, the senior leaders acknowledged they needed to understand the practical tasks of re-organising children's services in terms of fundamental questions such as defining collaboration, understanding how professionals would do it, and how services and inter-organisational relationships would be organised to enable collaboration.

Following the subsequent release of national policy and guidance from the Department for Schools, Children and Families (DSCF) the Stockborough Challenge was reformulated as a local-authority cultural change campaign to improve inter-

professional and inter-organisational collaboration across children's services. The changing emphases in national policy and in the Stockborough Challenge can be interpreted as leaderist or post-NPM reforms that sought to reconcile the contradictions within and between NPM logics and rationalities of performance-accountability and the policy imperative to increase collaboration.

The ECM agenda inhered the post-NPM contradictions of presenting professionals with the imperative to engage in inter-professional and inter-organisational collaboration to improve rhetorically holistic and interdependent outcomes for all children (i.e. being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and economic well-being), while service-specific targets remained and created the performative pressures that constrained collaboration. National policy makers outlined a range of policies and initiatives to increase collaborative activity, including common organisational structures and leadership and cultural change (DSCF, 2008); which in turn explains how the Stockborough Challenge was re-oriented to become about leadership, where the problem of collaboration would be addressed through leadership practices and technologies.

I have written elsewhere how the Challenge emerged and existed in a 'transient vacuum' where forms of rational and de-contextualised policy technologies were enacted but there was a sense that 'the centre doesn't hold' (Duggan 2014: 22). For example, the initiative aimed to improve collaboration but did not develop a definition of collaboration. Instead, the Stockborough Challenge was constituted in and through a range of managerialising change practices and processes such as vision and mission statements, celebration events, promotional mouse mats and a network of initiative 'champions'. However, without defining what collaborative working was and how professionals would perform collaboration it was not clear what, for example, the 'champions' would do. Thus senior leaders could not inform the champions what specific collaborative activities, practices and values they were to champion. They were, however, able to point to individual 'champion's such as Paul Lawler, a local headteacher, as exemplifying the Stockborough Challenge in action.

A Stockborough Challenge 'champion'

Paul Lawler was the headteacher at Dalewood High School and a Stockborough Challenge 'champion'. In line with post-NPM and the Stockborough Challenge, Paul sought to articulate a clear and persuasive leader vision through the Stockborough Challenge for teachers and professionals in his school and in the town of Dalewood to work together to improve the holistic outcomes of children and families. Paul had initiated two previous school-improvement processes but both had failed. The Stockborough Challenge, however, had inspired staff to engage in collaborative activity.

Paul Lawler's leadership was central to the Stockborough Challenge. He used the Challenge to create a vision of collaborative working around a focal point that cohered all the separate activities in his school as part of Dalewood Challenge and the Every Child Matters agenda. Paul described this process,

> It all comes back to the Challenge, where ever you start, the cooking project, school leadership it all comes back to, contributes to the Challenge. This is leadership of 'think big and start small.' You have your vision, what I want to do in Dalewood. So you have that and you do something that works towards that. So all those things I've talked about are under the umbrella of our vision [Stockborough Challenge] and that's a really powerful thing.

Paul used various labels to describe his leadership approach – courageous leadership, collaborative entrepreneur and systems leadership – but across his repertoire was a concern for authenticity and a mode of authentic leadership (e.g. Avolio et al 2005: 804). Authentic leadership was central to how Paul sought to navigate the leaderist challenge of reconciling the tensions between the constraints of the performance-accountability framework and the ECM policy imperative for increased collaboration. His solution was simple and straightforward, he told his staff, 'We're going to do what needs to be done and tick the box afterwards.'

This simple injunction rhetorically appeals to authentic motivations and ends for teachers (i.e. to do what needs to be done) as an equal and prior priority than the requirements of the performance-accountability framework (i.e. the box). This discursive shift seeks to redress the sense of inauthenticity experienced by teachers

whereby performance measures had replaced authentic forms of motivation and judgement (Ball, 2003; Woods, 2007). Crucially, however, the school's service-specific targets remained and so irrespective of what needed to be done the 'box' had to be ticked. Thus this instruction ignores or denies the perverse consequences of the target regime, where ticking the box and doing the right thing are not necessarily irreconcilable but *not* the same.

5. Re-thinking the Stockborough Challenge

In recounting the experience of the Stockborough Challenge, I aim to unsettle the apparent rationality, respectability and facility with which national policy makers, senior leaders and headteachers and by extension the sovereignty and utility of managerialising social technologies (e.g. leadership, visions and missions) are able to coordinate and organise the relationships between professionals.

This would be not to make fun or light of the senior leaders or professionals in Stockborough and Dalewood. The post-NPM reforms were fundamentally contradictory. Yet, informed and construed by rational and decontextualized forms of knowledge – where *any* change process can be led by leaders, supported by cultural change and animated by initiative champions – the Stockborough Challenge was constituted of ideas, activities and processes that curiously were not related to the initiative's original aim of supporting professionals with the practical challenges of working together to benefit young people, whether defined as the rhetorical holistic outcomes of the ECM agenda or actual organisational targets that are often found to constrain collaboration.

The warm and moving, if occasionally rather mundane, rhetoric of the Challenge and the Every Child Matters agenda, in Lawler's 'leadership of "think big and start small"' and the interdependent outcomes that 'every child shall be safe' may be demystified as rhetoric that masked the organisational targets beneath. Leader's visions can become discursive practices of persuasion, control and dominance of other professionals within the hierarchical power structures in schools (Courtney and Gunter 2015). Yet, to attribute a significant change in professionals' approach to working on the basis of being told to 'do want needs to be done' suggests a certain lack of reflexivity and credulity on the professionals' behalf.

An important concern was that the Stockborough Challenge was reported to have achieved *something* in Dalewood, where two previous initiatives had failed; the Challenge engendered a new sense of collaborative purpose. Here, Magical Marxism both takes account of the sense of power and reveals alternatives to the primacy of national and local policy, alternative ways of understanding how professionals are motivated and the relationships between public services and the communities they serve and are situated within. It precludes the discursively dominant one-directional relationship between public services and communities, where, for example, schools are *extended* into communities, in the Extended Schools programmes. Local authorities *make* places, in the Place-making agenda. Communities are *included* or *participate* in consultations.

There is a persuasive case that the vitality and power of the Stockborough Challenge originated from *outside* a supposed linear chain of national policy makers to the headteacher at Dalewood High School. The deputy headteacher Helena Sexton explained,

> Fantastic Food [Dalewood] was key in the school re-inventing itself… The thing with all the inter-professional, multi-agency, community links: you need a focus and it became about food and healthy eating. It helped us forge bonds between the school and the community, and the confidence building of the staff and the students.

Furthermore, Fantastic Food Dalewood was an organisation founded upon a radically different approach to thinking about organising, about leadership, about education, an approach that aligns with Magical Marxism and Spinoza.

Fantastic Food Dalewood

Fantastic Food Dalewood (FFD) is a community-based initiative that began in 2008 in the town of Dalewood with the aim 'to make Dalewood self-sufficient in food by 2018' (FFD Pamphlet, unpaged). Inspired by a critique of the unsustainability of western consumer-based lifestyles, Fantastic Food Dalewood engaged in a series of concrete and affective actions to inspire and cohere activity to make the town more sustainable. Adam Conway, one of the group's founding members, explained the

organisation's approach to re-founding the community on sustainable modes of living, mutuality and care,

> The question is how to bring people together, how to motivate them? When you talk about climate change and the resources of a finite planet it can seem too removed, to abstract for people to engage... We found that focusing on food – a simple idea – brings people together quite powerfully. Everyone gets it. Can see where they can fit in. What they can do.

This broad project, paraphrased as 'to powerfully bring everyone together', can be interpreted as a, 'collective strategy of collective liberation, whose guiding motto would be *as many as possible, thinking as much as possible* (Ethics, VP5-10).' (Balibar, 2008: 98) The founders realised the limitations of an information or critique *only* approach to inspiring or organising the people of Dalewood. Aligned with Spinoza, FFD's approach seems to recognise that there is no power in a true idea in driving out a false idea simply in it being true, in for example informing people of the unsustainability of current western lifestyles as an impetus to change behaviours and consumption patterns (Sharp, 2007).

There is equally something magical and utopian in the practical strategies through which Fantastic Food Dalewood seek to create spaces of hope and alterity through a campaign of 'guerrilla gardening' or 'propaganda planting' to transform the lived experience of the community. Aligned with an activist ethos of asking for forgiveness rather than permission, the members of FFD planted herbs at the train station for commuters to pick on the way home, wheat outside the police station and fruit and vegetables in informal and un-used land around the town. These spaces and pockets of affirmation re-imagine empty and unproductive ground as productive sites for growing plants and food but also augmenting dynamic relationships across the community. Fantastic Food Dalewood's, 'critical power doesn't come from criticism but from an ability to disrupt and reinvent, to create desire and inspire hope' (Merrifield 2011: 18).

There are many initiatives in schools and communities that grow plants or crops, such as the 'Britain in Bloom' competition where towns and villages plant attractive flowers to beautify streets and parks, and in doing so build affective responses such

as civic pride. Beyond this, however, a significant aspect of Fantastic Food Dalewood's work was to see and seek to realise unity and continuity across the community,

> We're trying to make something here, an experiment of what one town can do if everyone collaborates and there's no boundaries between the school and the community.

A series of practical acts provided a clear and powerful focus for collaborations between FFD and Dalewood High School: creating shared raised beds and collective gardening projects, establishing new organisational forms such as a mutually owned land trust with an aquaponics project to raise fish and grow produce in one integrated system. Thus FFD's engagement with the Dalewood High School was part of a broader educative strategy and processes of collective emancipation for the whole community, where affective and political processes of coming together explore new forms of sociality, mutuality and care. Where education is not just an individual's investment in credentials for future economic gain but rather an orientation to collective action in the present to re-found communities on sustainable modes of living (Facer 2013).

It is at this point that we can begin to understand and question the curious presumption that a community initiative, such as Fantastic Food Dalewood, should not have inspired and informed, augmented the power and vitality of a school or public-sector initiative, such as the Stockborough Challenge. Fantastic Food Dalewood's approach was orientated to engaging, subverting and aligning the school with its agenda of making the town more sustainable.

6. Re-thinking leadership

In this final section I consider how leadership might be conceptualised otherwise, through the lens of Magical Marxism with Spinoza. It is important to recognise the questionable yet understandable tendency for critical management studies to seek to generalise from a single case study. Thus I seek to address a potential criticism before pointing to two potential new directions, rather than make any definitive claims.

First, I seek to address a fair counter argument to the call to invent rather than critique, for poetry and positivity rather than negativity, for imagination and magical dreaming rather than rationality and calculation, which is that powerful structures and forces such as capitalist discipline, the state, and forms of performative education persist. Indeed, such commitments could be easily dismissed as fanciful and naïve, compared to the productive power and alacrity with which education has been transformed via neoliberalising, mangerialising and corporatising projects. This is not to ignore the persuasive analyses explicating the powerful role in which, for example, the reduction and commensuration of education to performance data has led to the 'the evisceration of a progressive imaginary' (Lingard 2011: 335), and the strategic and agential positioning of leadership and leaders in delivering this agenda (Gunter, 2011).

The Stockborough Challenge, as indicative of post-NPM reforms, demonstrates the ideological commitment to leadership and managerialising social technologies, rationalities and assumptions. In recounting the constraints and limitations of this initiative, however, it is apparent that the social, political and critical critiques of leadership are persuasive. In seeking to propose a radical and imaginative alternative, howsoever *serious* or *poetic*, it is helpful to remember the contradictions, tensions, ironies and irrationality of mainstream practices. Furthermore, it is a Magical Marxist contention, that it is imagination and poetry of life that disrupts and replaces the hegemony's ostensible respectability, rationality, and good order. It is not enough to identify these forms of rationality as irrational or fantastical but rather a new fantasy is needed.

One, therefore, I argue for resisting the turn to and assumptions of leadership and explore alternative approaches for how activity within and between schools and communities might be inspired, motivated and organised. Returning to Adam Conway's (paraphrased) problematic of how 'to powerfully bring everyone together' that we might re-state in terms of a Spinozist project of 'the search for a collective strategy of collective liberation, whose guiding motto would be *as many as possible, thinking as much as possible* (Ethics, VP5-10).'

What this might mean theoretically and practically is not clear. As Sharp (2007: 750) observes, 'Spinoza's suggestions for the collective cultivation of reason and joyful affects in light of our radical finitude remain underdeveloped… he is not very clear about the precise practices, institutions, or environments that fortify thinking.' I argue it is with reference to other practical experiments such as Fantastic Food Dalewood and with approaches such as Magical Marxism that these practices, institutions, or environments might be developed.

Two, against a landscape of visionary yet conventional, transformational yet corporatising leaders and leadership I make the case for learning from Magical Marxist approaches. One issue with such an approach is whether Magical Marxist-inspired forms of leadership relating to collective agency and radical imagination are *only* appropriate to community activism and civil society. Emphasising the agency of privileged community activists, such as Fantastic Food Dalewood, is reminiscent of the David Cameron's 'Big Society' initiative, which sought to replace state-funded, professional public services with voluntary, citizen-run services as part of an ideological shift to a post-bureaucratic state (Smith 2010). I make the case, however, that Magical Marxism opens up a diverse repertoire of strategies, practices and rationalities for leadership as inspired forms of radical imagination and collective agency by both citizens and public leaders.

Doris Sommer's (2014) *The Work of Art in the World: Civic Agency and Public Humanities* presents examples of civic projects where leaders, town mayors, have led projects of civic renewal informed by poetic, philosophical, playful and artistic approaches. A noted example is Antanas Mockus, who during the 1990s was a two-time mayor of Bogota, Colombia. Mockus's motto was 'What would an artist do?' While mayor he employed a series of affective, ludic, provocative yet practicable strategies. He replaced the city's notoriously corrupt traffic police with mime artists to mock traffic rule offenders. Mockus dressed in lycra as 'Super Citizen' and offered citizens the opportunity to pay an additional tax of 10%, which 63,000 citizens did (Sommer 2014).

Significantly, Mockus's work was evidenced-based and data-driven but it was not underpinned by managerialising or neoliberalising rationalities but rather the

practices and criteria for making and judging art, which emphasise ambivalence and are asserted without pre-fixed criteria of value (Sommer, 2014). Such an approach is open to ludic experimentation, creativity and civic agency in inspiring and cohering alternative forms of organising communities and education.

Conclusion

Is the affirmative project (i.e. the removal and replacement of the ontological commitments within public administration and governance) philosophically and practically possible? There are significant doubts (e.g. Noys 2010). Nevertheless, the tantalising prospect and necessity of radical imagination persists as is demonstrated by the activities Fantastic Food Dalewood and the affective leadership of Antanas Mockus. Is it possible to articulate and realise a fundamental realignment of the practices, rationalities and technologies of governance for our schools and communities according to a project of radical emancipation and collective rational and affective reasoning and action? As Merrifield responds,

> To what extent, though, can anything like this be true, actually be real? Well, that depends upon what you dream up, what your dream-thought and dream-content bestows upon wide-awake reality, how it re-appropriates that reality. And that depends on your imagination. (Merrifield 2011)

The challenge for the field in view of this insight is to privilege and employ imagination in order to articulate and realise a fundamental realignment of the practices, rationalities and technologies of governance for our schools and communities. Nothing less will achieve a project characterised by the necessary radical emancipation and collective rational and affective reasoning and action.

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